1916 2.

25 Oct 1918

TELEGRAMS:
"ALLEDORA, WESTRAND.
LONDON."

1917 CLUB
4, GERRARD STREET, W.1.

Friday.

Dearest,

I've just been to the Omega show, & had the great pleasure of seeing your picture sold for £15 to Mrs Jowett, so Roger said — however I'm not writing to say that but to have some occupation which shall save me from Jack Squire in the midst of the most appalling uproar, of the most degraded looking C.O.'s who are all met here to croak like so many dull ~~rac~~ raucous vociferating & disgorging Cormorants. Their

Perhaps I can
hurl an
envoy
faster
towards me.
We shew
war a
great villain
accusing
to Roger-
Browning's
telling like
portraiture.
Bobo was
there, triumphant
& prolific:
Sitwell:
Firbank:
Irene is forcing
to care a baby.

being so, I can't give you my extreme
intense impressions of the show, as
I mean to. I have to wait for
Leonard to come out to dinner.
There is Mr. Manners & Langdon Davies, &
old Hobson & Commander Greenfell—
but I fail to convey the power &
their joint attack. We've just
had tea with Roger & discussed the
Burial Service; & Lytton has waived
to us in "extreme desolation" "to be
there for the week end; which L. is
going to do — at least for Saturday
only. Oliver says the twilight of
Carruthers approaches. I feel more &
more convinced that advanced views are
purely a matter of physiognomy. For
instance the lady in green, with check
trimmings in her hat & a face like a
ruddy but diseased apple — one cleft
asunder by a brown growth —
had no other excuse for existence.
The noise is terrific.

HAMNET 1/24/69

Perhaps I can
pull an
evening
paper
towards me.
We show
was a
great relief -
actually
to Roger -
Browning
telling like
portraits.
Both are
them, pamphlets
& prolific:
Sitwell:
Irene is forcibly
to have a baby.

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intense impressions of the show, as
I mean to. I have to wait for
Leonard to come out to dinner.
There is Mr. Mann, & Langdon Davies, &
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had no other excuse for existence.
The noise is terrific.

NYPL

Hornie 12/24/69

Ryn Oct-27
1962

Aysgarth

Sunday.

Dearest.

I don't know whether to laugh or hold up my hands in amazement at the charges made against me in the Mary Gentler affair, & at the general state of affairs revealed by your letter & Lytton's account both of which were sprung upon me yesterday. However, I'd better tell you what happened at Ashcham. We both remember quite well the only conversation I ever had with Gentler about Mary, & agree as to what was said. Gentler told us how extremely interesting Mary was, how sorry he found her, & how they discussed everything together. I said that I'd no doubt this was true but that she was always very silent with me, & that I scarcely knew her. There was no question as to whether I liked her or not. Gentler then said how strange it was that she was silent, & asked whether I had ever seen her at Charleston, whether she was silent there too. I said that I'd only seen her then one, that I thought she was just as silent with you as with me. There was absolutely no discussion as to what you thought of Mary. Gentler did not ask me; & was much more interested in declaring his own relation with her than anyone elses. In fact, I'm prepared to write to Mary or to swear in a Court of law that nothing was said or insinuated

which could have led Gertler to suppose that you were bored by Mary, criticised her, or in any way found fault with her. After all, why should I have made out that you dislike Mary? You've certainly always said you liked her to me, & I've always maintained that the whole of your relationship is a triumph of sense & civilisation for everyone concerned. As Sheerman & Hutchinson have a motive for making mischief I should have thought it was more reasonable to impute it entirely to them. I don't think Gertler was in the least malicious or even inquisitive, but entirely absorbed in himself & his own relations as usual.

At the same time I can't conceive why, even had I said that you disliked Mary, it should have 'nearly had disastrous results' for you, as you say, or upset Mary for more than a moment. She had only to go to you & ask you the truth, & spend an hour or two in abusing me, which she is quite welcome to do. The exaggeration seems to me terrific & absurd. However, that's none of my business. What I object to, naturally I think, is being made the victim of this infernal spy system. It's quite plain that it's hopeless for us to try & know each other's friends, & in future I shall have to try & steer clear of Gertler, Sheerman, Mary, Jack, Clive & all the rest of that set. I suppose I should have been wise if I had done so in the beginning. But shall I wind up my relations with Mary by writing her an exact copy of what I have said to you?

How I've wasted all my time writing this, & I can't go on to talk to you about Edith Sichel's life, or Saxon or Lady Mary Murray — After all, how am I to know that Mr Stagg may not have committed suicide already on hearing through Barbara through Trevise through Blanche that I said he preferred his gold teeth to her?

Yr B.

NYPL

HAMILL 12/29/69

1918

Nov. 11th

Hogarth. 11.30

Dearest,

The guns have been going off for half an hour, & the sirens whistling, so I suppose we are at peace, & I can't help being glad that your precious imp will be born into a moderately reasonable world. I see we're not going to be allowed any quiet all day though as people seem to be whistling & giving catcalls & stirring up the dogs to bark, though it's all done in such an intermittent kind of way that it's not in the least impressive — only unsettling. Besides it's very grey & smoky, — oh dear, now drunken soldiers are beginning to cheer. How am I to write my last chapter with all this shindy, & Nelly & Lottie bursting in to ask — here is Nelly with 4 different flags which she is putting in all the front rooms. Lottie says we ought to do something. I see she is soon going to burst into tears. She insists upon polishing the door knocker, & shouting out across the road to the old fireman who lives opposite. O God! What a noise they make — & I, on the whole though rather emotional (would you be, I wonder?) feel also immensely melancholy; yes, you're well out of it, because every taxi is now hooting, & the school children I know will form up round the flag in a moment. There is certainly an atmosphere of the death bed too.

At this moment a harmonium is playing a hymn, & a large union Jack has been hoisted onto a pole— But this must be fearfully dull to read about.

As to gossip, we went to tea with Nelly yesterday, & afterwards to a concert given at Shelley House; but first imagine poor Nelly more shrivelled & sunken than ever, wearing the most piteous expression, like an imprisoned monkey; I've never seen anyone who seemed to ask one more to put her out of her misery. Thrive have moved to a horrid little house on the Embankment, which she has done up in the old Kitty, chintz curtains, white walls, green boards style. I rather liked her though. She agreed that Leo & Lord Northcliffe ought to be banished as well as the Kaiser, & said she thought the English in many ways worse than the Germans. And then we went on to this appalling house where I'd been asked by Bruce Richmond & there I saw our entire past, alive, incredibly the same as ever NYPL Mrs Rathbone, Mrs. Muir Mackenzie, Enid M.M., precarily as she was at Hyde Park Gate, Hervey Vaughan Williams any number of people who weren't Kathy George but might have been; all dressed up so irreproachably so nice, kind, respectable— so insufferable— you remember the kind of politeness, & the little jokes, & all the deference, & opening door for one, & looking as if the mention of the w.c. even would convey nothing whatever to them. I enjoyed it immensely; but I couldn't help seeing us in white Latin. Mrs Young's being taken down to supper. The house itself is incredible— an enormous, cultivated, sham 18th century house, with vast portraits of young girls holding bunches of roses, & looking into the future,

while a small wheta path meanders away under
ot apple trees in the destana. And then, painted
on the panels, were those sort of geographical
pictures which are meant to be not quite serious
but very charming; maps of Chelsea hospital,
with decorative clouds all very flat, & brightly coloured. And pale green Morris
curtains & china pots standing on little wooden stools;
Italy represented too, by Carlo Fracanzano of the
Virgin & child; & loads of Japanese figures; but
all infinitely pale, watery, & ugly, far more
than any pluck lodging house. This
by the way, applies also to the decorations of
Wells & Ka's flat, which impressed me very
much greatly; acid lemon colours against
black curtains & one white rose against a
wall the colour of skim milk. There's no
doubt that you have done a great work in
rolling up the Thames; at least I dislike a great
many things now with an intensity which
owing to my punishment in the case of Mary,
I daresay I should be wise to hide. What one
instinctively says about Will is "What a whippersnapper!"
but I implore you, don't give this out as my
carefully considered opinion. Its the effect this
mongrel cur's body; his face which appears
powdered & painted like a very refined old
suburban harlots; & his ridiculous little voice.
I love Ka yet nervous when my eyes rested two
long upon him. The were much relieved when

he try an to ~~talk~~ use slang & talk manly: & I daresay he has his parts, (I dont mean only in the phytical sense) but I'm as convinced as I am that the church bells have now begun to ring that he'll never be a painter. I saw one wonderful & fretful work of his — the Downs by moonlight; but he said it was a sketch, & blushed very modestly that he didn't belong to the Omega school. He expressed great admiration for you & Duncan, as painters; & you'd be amused to hear what an impression you as a human being made on him. You had only to come into the Friday Club he said to change the feeling completely: I gathered you made things real, & larger, & impetuously composed a profound.

"Yes, I'll always maintain, said old Ka, who sat on the hearthrug stitching at one of her usual cushions, that Vanessa is one of the few great people I've ever known."

"Ah but my dear Ka, try & explain how she does it!" I cried.

NYPL

Then we set to & analysed the famous remark of mine about your reality, which they both said that they felt strongly. & thought most remarkable, so I'm not alone. You will have heard of Barbara's brat. Saxon seems fairly composed, & means to call it Judith. According to Oliver he assumes that he is the spiritual begetter at any rate, & Nick scarcely counts even for that act; Oliver agrees with me that Saxon is happier than usual. Then we had Norton to dinner, & I felt a kind of reverence for him as the representative of old Cambridge, as we knew it, in the days of "personal emotions"; I must say I think it probably the highest type in the world, & it wrecks all my religious feelings. We've now had marriage bells, one hymn, God save the King twice over, about a dozen separate cheers, & the old gentleman opposite has climbed to the top of a tree with an immense Union Jack. Vive

HAMILL 6/1/66

NW13
9QB
1908

Wednesday

Hogarth.

Dearest,

Modesty requires me to say that you will be sick of the sight of my handwriting — so now that's said. The truth is that it's still very difficult to settle to anything. Peace seems to make much more difference than one could have thought possible, though I think the rejoicing, so far as I've seen it, has been very sordid & depressing. I expect it was much better in the country, & I wish we'd been at Arbeham, & come over & had a civilised debauch with you & the brats.

I had to go to the dentist in Wigmore St on Monday, at 3, & by 4 the streets were in such a state that if I hadn't met L: & buffeted through the crowd with him I don't think I should have got home. As it was a small boy was almost crushed in the tube at my feet: we were so packed we could hardly pick him out; everyone seemed half drunk — beer bottles were passed round — every wounded soldier was kissed by women: nobody had any notion where to go or what to do; it poured steadily; crowds drifted up & down the pavements waving flags & jumping into omnibuses, but in such a disorganised, half hearted, sordid state that I felt more & more melancholy & hopeless of the human race. The London

poor. half drunk a very sentimental or complacately stolid with their hideous voices & clothes & bad teeth.. make one doubt whether any decent life will ever be possible, or whether it matters if we're always or at peace. But I suppose the poor wretches haven't much notion how to celebrate express their feelings. At present it seems to be a mixture of Bank Holiday & Sunday. The clocks strike licentiously, in a very disordered way. So far the only changes I've noticed is that we get no newspapers because the boys won't deliver them, & the bases are let up, but our lamps are as dark as ever, & the telephones have practically broken down.

I'm going up to see Katherine Mansfield today, & I shall ask Fortnum & Masons about your parcel. If contained only delicacies like pate de foie gras, & shortbread which won't go bad, & I think it's most likely that the trains were too disorganised to deliver it. But I'll add a note at the end of this to say what the people at the shop think.

Did Bunny ever get a letter from me containing a £1 note for honey? I must have sent it more than a week ago; I hope it wasn't stolen; we've had to take to making our own butter by shaking milk in a bottle, as our allowance is very scanty. Jam also is rather scarce, so I hope we may get our honey in time.

Poor Katherine Mansfield seems very bad, though I don't like to ask her how bad, & she says she's going to Switzerland with Murry & will be cured. I can't help finding her very interesting, in spite of her story in the English Review; at least the care about writing, which

as I'm coming to think, is about the rarest & most desirable of gifts. I had a fearfully depressing talk with old Janet Case the other day, at the end of which I came to the conclusion that when nice educated people who've spent their living in teaching Greek & ought to know something about it, have less feeling for modern fiction, including my own which she adored me to give up & take to biography instead (even that was 'useful', than a stranded jelly fish on which the flies have already debled) it's high time for us writers to retire to the South Seas. There is practically no one in London now whom I can talk to either about my own writing or Shakespeares. I'm beginning to think that I'd better stop writing novels, since no one cares a damn whether one writes them or not. Do you ever feel that your entire life is useless - passed in a dream, into which now & then these brutal buffaloes come butting? or are you always certain that you matter, & matter more than other people? I believe having children must make a lot of difference; & yet perhaps it's no good making them responsible for one's own inefficiency - but I mean rather transparency - nonentity - unreality.

Here I am now at the 17 Club. London seems quieted down - only one drunken soldier abusing an officer - only one old lady making a speech in the train about "what we owe you boys." I've been to

Forthnum's & Mason's who say that the parcel was probably not sent last week owing to the rush they were in. If it hasn't come in the next day or two, would you send me a line, as they will find out about it.

I've sent the woodcut. I'm very pleased you're doing another. We are getting along with the printing so send them as soon as you can — at least the big one. The other wd. do later.

NYPL

What are Duncan & Bunny going to do? Adrian seems to be staying on at present — so does Norton — Gerald asked L. to lunch today, I suppose to discuss how he's to get work.

Now I must go — but I feel as if I could write you sheets every day. For example, I want to express my views as to you & Duncan's duty to civilisation in future — but as I say, that may wait. I ran into Mrs. Flower in the London Library. We & Oliver too! Merely spat at each other. Here is Oliver's young lady. B.

Oliver's young lady has a thin, disagreeable face (O here's Oliver)

HARVARD 6/1/66

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& Oliver too! Merely spat at each other — Here is Olivier's young lady. B.

HAMILL 6/1/66

Nov 19
1918

Hogarth.

Tuesday,

Dearest,

I hope I shall be praised for taking up the pen so soon again. But you know the form of thanks I like — a few reflections, however bald, not but what you possess a natural style of considerable eloquence & vigour, as I have told you more than once.

As to business — the in the first place about Atheham. I think it can be managed all right if you would let me know fairly soon which week-end you want to have it. We had some thoughts of going down ourselves one week-end before long — Would it do if the children had ~~my~~ our bedroom, & Mrs B. my study, & do you think they could manage with one sitting room — either Leonard's or the drawing room? I don't expect they'd use much coal, but the rooms would have to be aired first, & we're got to make our coal last over Christmas — but I think we've got plenty. There's a certain amount of wood cut up in the

little room out of Leonard's room. We always use that in the sitting room; & I think there's enough for a week end. I'm sure Mrs B. is most economical, implore her not to say anything about the filthy condition of the house; nor to be shocked at the number of my old shirts. Let me know when they want it, & I'll write to Mrs Geall. She's very good if they should want her to do anything.

We're getting on with the printing. Have you any idea how many copies we ought to sell — what price we could ask? I saw a dummy copy of the Omega book which is very magnificent but fearfully expensive; I don't see how one's to buy it, & the sands are running out, soon it will be 15/-. Possibly you know some names of artists whom I might send notices to; we think of getting 2 or 3 little books ready before we send out, so as to have give people something at once. By the way, is there any paper that specially good for woodcuts? I rather think we shall print the big one on a separate sheet & paste it in, so we could get the right paper for it — What about the cover? I don't think Rogers' price have gone down, but I'm dining with him tonight, & I'll ask. Before I dashed off another little story, would you do some pictures for that, or is the priceless specimen, my nephew, too

near to make it possible? Talking of babies,
Moon has got a son today; & Gladys Holman
Hunt is married to a captain of some kind – a
bold kind I should think to wipe up that
appalling mid-Victorian mess. When did it
happen? In the early nineties of last
century? I knew I was mad at Welwyn at
the time. And as to gossip, you'd be
amused & delighted to hear how Ottoline
spent the first day of peace. She wrote an
account git to Katherine. She has reached the
depths of disillusionment. Siegfried Sassoon was
there & "terribly, terribly spoilt. I
never want to seem him again – so coarse,
so ordinary, so just like any other
conceited young guardsman – I felt he had
been seeing odious people, who had changed
him completely." That was more or less
her account of it; & she said how she was
tired of doing kindnesses, & having her hand
bitten in return; & how, on peace day, she put a
candle in every window, she didn't feel happy in
the least. I'm pretty certain that Gertler
has made mischief there too; she's been in
London for a week or so & never asked me to see
her. The malice of that man must be considerable.
Did he really make out I'd had several conversations

with him about Mary. I expect that was his purpose
in coming to Athenaeum. The question of peace is an
extremely interesting one. We literary people have been
comparing our feelings a good deal. Desmond heard
the news early in the morning, & went straight to
Buckingham Palace. He says the crowd was very good
there, & they had bands, & climbed all over the Victoria
memorial, pulling themselves up by her nose & breasts;
then the King & Queen came out; like two little dolls.
Afterwards he wandered into a restaurant & found
two men fighting, & tried to separate them & was
knocked on the head, & then they apologized, & he
led one of them off, whose nose was bleeding, & they
spent some time in a lavatory; & he became rather
depressed, & wandered off, & found things a little flat,
& gave a great shout by himself in the Kings Road,
& nobody took any notice of him. But he is writing an
account of his feeling. I think I shall too. The
dazed discontented aimless feeling was to succeed; starting
with such emotions & high pitches, & getting gradually more
& more sodden & depressed, & wanting to do something very
exciting & not knowing what. Murry was at the War
Office. He said he tried to feel but couldn't feel anything
except horror & misery. Old war office officials began
saying the most extraordinary things; but he remained
completely cold & disgusted. Harrison, the dentist,
said that peace was much worse than war; nobody kept
their appointments. Harry Stephen said that Mafeking
night was far better; James Strachey didn't seem to have
noticed much difference; Oliver thought the spectacle
slightly sad, but rather amusing; we've been trying to get
up a peace party, but Ray has influenza, & no one will
lend a room. Everybody is walks about the
streets, & looks very happy.

B.

NYPL

HARVARD 6/1/66